



# Herbal Tinctures

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## TOOLS:

- [Blender \(1\)](#)
- [Cutting board \(1\)](#)
- [Herbal reference books \(1\)](#)
- [Sharp knife \(1\)](#)
- [Strainer \(1\)](#)  
*fine mesh.*

## PARTS:

- [Dandelions \(1\)](#)  
*vegetable glycerin, or vinegar.*
- [Vodka \(1\)](#)  
*clean jars with airtight lids.*
- [Jars \(1\)](#)  
*dark glass bottles for storage.*
- [Glass bottles \(1\)](#)

## SUMMARY

Herbalists are some of the original DIYers. They balk at the idea of purchasing from giant pharmaceutical companies what they can make themselves: namely, folk medicine. And they've been doing it for centuries.

It's easy and more common than you think to take herbal medicine. Munching on some parsley after dinner is one way, or sipping on chamomile tea to relieve stress is another. It's just as easy, if only a little more time-consuming, to follow ancient techniques to create your own potent tinctures that extract and preserve the qualities of many useful plants.

**Step 1 — Gather herbs and preparing the plant matter.**



- Dandelions are the perfect place to start. This common flower has many significant actions on the body. It is a bitter herb and a powerful digestive aid. Taking it in small amounts as a tonic for the body is very safe, and can be quite helpful in curing any number of ailments, including sluggish digestion and even skin breakouts. It's often seen in salads or in the ever-popular dandelion wine.
- We'll be making 3 types of tinctures with dandelions: alcohol, glycerin, and vinegar. Before you start taking a tincture, I recommend, nay, insist, that you learn about the properties of herbs and the recommended dosages of tinctures. There are many excellent books and websites available on the subject. It's a wonderful way to apply the do-it-yourself spirit to your health. Check out the list of resources [here](#).
- Find the perfect dandelion, and dig up the whole thing. The roots of dandelions are long, strong, and twisting. Do your best to get as much root matter as possible. If some of the root happens to break off, don't fret; the bit left behind will grow into a whole new plant. At this point, hippies, witches, and shamans will thank the plant for giving up its life to create healing medicine. Although it's fringe behavior, and talking to plant spirits makes you a weirdo, can it really hurt to express gratitude to Mother Nature?
- Otherwise, shake the dirt off the root ball and huck your plants into a basket: flower, seedpod, leaves, roots, and all.
- In my research, I found that using the whole plant gives you the most complete tonic, but if you like, yours can be just root, just leaf, or just flower. In this example we use it all, even the spent flower heads that went to seed. The plants will be dirty. Rinse, rinse, rinse them.
- After the dandelions have been cleaned, start chopping them up. Chop the roots first. The hard, dark root bark will part to reveal pure, white flesh. Juicy, milky sap will ooze out. That's the good stuff. Next, chop the leaves and stems into bits as well.
- I didn't use a knife for the flower heads. Instead I waited until right before I was going to use them, then I picked them apart with my fingers. I like pulling petals off flowers — it's fun!

**Step 2 — Add menstruum and blend.**

- Menstruum is the herbalist's word for solvent. It's the liquid in the recipe. The menstruum extracts the properties of the plant, and at the same time preserves them, almost indefinitely. I made 3 different tinctures of dandelion:
  - 1 with alcohol, 1 with vegetable glycerin, and 1 with vinegar.
  - Alcohol is an excellent menstruum; 100 proof grain alcohol is the best choice, but vodka, gin, or rum can be used in its place. This example uses the strongest vodka I could find at the market here in California, 80 proof (40% alcohol).
  - Vegetable glycerin also extracts and preserves, but must be refrigerated. Glycerin is perfect for children or other people for whom alcohol is contraindicated. It's available with a little searching. It's thick and sticky, so dilute it to 50% with spring water.
  - Vinegar is great because it's tasty and can be used in cooking, or served on salads. I used apple cider vinegar, although white or red will also work.
- Place the chopped plant matter into a jar, then pour in the menstruum until the plant matter is just barely covered with liquid. I made 1 jar of each type of menstruum, all using the same proportions. Now pour the mixture into a blender. Blend to your heart's content. I stopped when the particles of plant seemed good and pulverized, and the liquid was cloudy and milky. Pour it all back into the jar, and screw the lid on tight.

### Step 3 — Wait and shake.



- For the next 6 weeks, store your jar in a cool, dark place, and shake it vigorously every day. Shaking the tincture prevents the plant matter from settling, and exposes more of its surface area to the menstruum. Shake it and then store it; store it and then shake it. Checking on the tincture every day allows you to watch the transformation from green liquid to darker brown.

### Step 4 — Bottle and label.



- After 6 weeks, the tincture is strong and potent. Strain the plant matter from the fluid. Then, using a funnel, pour the tincture into a dark glass bottle for long-term storage. Vinegar and alcohol tinctures have a very long shelf life. Glycerin tinctures do too, as long as they are refrigerated.
- Oh, and don't forget to make a clear, readable label for this medicine. Include the plant name and the parts of the plant used, the menstruum used, and the date the tincture was made.

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